



**Productive
Learning
u
Strategies**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2003 – 2004**

prepared by
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report will provide information about the activities of the PLS program's staff and students throughout the academic year 2003 – 2004. It will also highlight the contributions that have been made to the University as well as to communities outside of DePaul by PLS. This is the second all electronic Annual Report of the PLS Program. Based on last year's first all-electronic-distribution's feedback this method is preferable as it allows for an easier navigation within the report by using the contents page's bookmarks and for several hyperlinks to relevant information to be included. If a link leads to a document other than this report, a new window will open allowing the reader to access the information while maintaining his or her position in the report. This report can also be accessed as a Microsoft Word document on the [PLS website](#), in the event a hard copy is needed. The last two years' annual reports are also available at the PLS website to allow for comparisons (statistics, progress of long-term goals, etc) and to provide a chronological context of PLS' progression and evolution.

The 2003-2004 academic year marked the nineteenth year of operation of the Productive Learning Strategies (PLS) Program at DePaul University. Similarly to the last three years, the number of students requesting services increased, as did the number of inquiries from junior and senior high school students. For yet another year, the status that PLS has achieved on a national level was confirmed on several instances during this year, recognizing PLS as one of the few comprehensive Learning Disabilities (LD) support programs in the state and in the country which consistently provides quality services.

Some of the occasions that contributed to the affirmation of PLS' status are:

In October of 2003, PLS was invited to participate in CHOICES, the annual Post-Secondary Education Options Night organized by seven school districts in the greater Chicagoland area. CHOICES is the largest 'College Night' in Chicagoland, organized by District 113 (Deerfield High School and Highland Park High School), District 125 (Adali Stevenson High School), District 225 (Glenbrook High School), District 207 (Maine Township High School), District 219 (Niles Township High School), District 202 (Evanston Township High School), and District 203 (New Trier High School). PLS met with parents and students to discuss options and services at the post-secondary education level and it represented DePaul along numerous other universities and colleges from across the country.

In March of 2004, representatives of Harper College visited PLS to gather information on organization, function, services offered, and overall design of the program as they were researching successful LD support programs ways of functioning.

In May 2004, PLS was invited to participate in the Annual Business Breakfast organized each year by the Niles Township High Schools. This is a function available for the junior and senior students of the Niles High Schools who are interested in learning more about employment, the working force and have a focus on business opportunities as they relate to their education.

PLS (under the name *Project Learning Strategies*) was established in 1984 with a FIPSE grant. Initially, PLS was supported by DePaul through the School of Education but has had its own "stand alone" budget since the 1994-95 academic year, reflecting the fact that PLS serves students from throughout the University's schools and colleges at the undergraduate as well as graduate level.

It is interesting to note that in the [U.S. Department of Education](#) website a search of 'LD and Higher Education' will bring 64,573 results listed by relevance having DePaul University's PLS Program first, while a search of 'LD Resources' and 'LD services' will bring 18,765 and 30,910 results respectively having PLS as the second most relevant result. For the complete article please go to: [DePaul University: Equal Opportunity for Learning Disabled Students](#)

II. PHILOSOPHY & MISSION

PLuS' philosophy and mission are in line with [DePaul University's Mission](#) as the program strives to "educate students to be lifelong, independent learners" while serving students who "vary in age, ability, experience and career interests." It also "identifies and offers special assistance to students of high potential who have been handicapped by educational, personal or societal obstacles beyond their control" while it maintains a "sensitivity to and care for the needs of each other and of those served." This "God-given dignity of each person" is of the utmost importance to the program and it embodies the core beliefs of PLuS.

PLuS' Mission Statement

The core of PLuS' mission is to support students by helping them succeed in college while they are becoming educated and independent life-long learners, and by providing opportunities for the DePaul community to better understand the difficulties these students have to overcome. To achieve this, PLuS is using education, advocacy and high quality of services.

Focusing on each student's strengths and weaknesses, PLuS strives to empower students by teaching them skills and strategies which they can apply to their current educational careers and to their professional lives after graduation.

Focusing on each student's experiences, PLuS advocates for the students' rights in accordance with state and federal laws; in addition, PLuS attempts to educate the DePaul community in having a better understanding of Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorders.

Focusing on current research, ideas and trends, PLuS attempts to maintain the highest standards of professionalism by providing services from a comprehensive, collaborative, and innovative point-of-view; instead of adhering to a specific remediation theory, PLuS is using the strengths and weaknesses of each student and of each LD specialist to create an individualized remedial plan that addresses the specific needs of each student.

PLuS' Philosophy

PLuS' philosophy is to provide students with the necessary tools that would ensure academic success while enabling them to be independent. The goal is for each student to understand his/her learning strengths and weaknesses and choose the most appropriate learning strategies that will help the student achieve his/her academic and career goals. PLuS, recognizing the wide variety of students served, does not subscribe to a specific methodology of teaching learning disabled students, but rather focuses on the instruction of learning strategies and skills that take into account each student's strengths and weaknesses. Combining remediation of basic skills, instruction in compensatory strategies and instruction in study/learning strategies that maximize the use of each student's strengths, will allow students to become active, independent learners and function well not only in the classroom but into the work environment as well.

Students who have accomplished the goals that they set in conjunction with PLuS may, in consultation with their clinician, elect to go on "Independent Status." Students on Independent Status receive all the other accommodations and services offered by PLuS while they may see a clinician or the director on an "at need" basis only.

Particularly for students who have Attention Deficit Disorders, PLuS clinicians teach skills in organization and time management. These students typically come to college with the skills they need to succeed but have difficulty applying them to their own work. Most often, students need assistance in short-term planning to accomplish long-term goals, and in understanding that their difficulties are not due to an inability to pay attention, but rather to a predisposition to equally focus on all of the stimuli they receive, thus resulting in sensory overload.

The quality of the services, the individualized approach to remediation, the integration of strengths, weaknesses, skills and strategies, and the dedication of the PLuS clinicians distinguish PLuS from the majority of similar programs in the state of Illinois and in the nation. PLuS, and a few other programs nationwide, provide "comprehensive services" for the students who have learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders which go beyond what is required by the law [[The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and [The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504](#)]. Research has concluded that these services provide every possible opportunity for success for college students who have learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders; students themselves credit as the major strength of college programs for students with learning disabilities, the opportunity to work with a learning disabilities specialist in trying to understand their unique strengths and how to use them to compensate for their weaknesses; and High School Transition Counselors consistently advice students to visit colleges and universities and ask about the level of LD and/or AD/HD support services (See [Appendix A](#) for a list of references). Finally, the students participating in the PLuS Program have expressed similar thoughts to the PLuS director and clinicians, and they cite the one-to-one clinician service as a determining factor of choosing DePaul University.

Even if research did not exist to support the claim that teaching students how to best use their strengths while compensating for their weaknesses, is the most effective way for them to become independent, the PLuS students' success stories would be enough. One of the best examples of student success this year was the following e-mail PLuS received in April of 2004:

"Hello All,

I will make this brief. Thanks to all of you who have helped and been supportive during my law school adventure. As of this morning and according to the Illinois Bar Association web site I have passed the bar exam. That is all, carry on."

The student passed the exam the first time, finished his studies at the Law School within the expected time-frame while working full-time. He was also diagnosed for the first time when he enrolled at DePaul University after being referred to PLuS by an insightful Law School faculty member.

Another LD support program that has been known for the quality of the services it provides is the [Learning Opportunities \(LOP\) Program](#) (LOP) at Barat College. LOP has been known among high schools, colleges and universities for a number of years as a support program that will guide college students to success. When Barat College became part of DePaul University PLuS and LOP met and discussed the logistics of this merge. The two programs concluded that they will maintain their autonomy and the students would be accommodated based on their 'home college'; for those students who might take courses in both campuses, PLuS and LOP will collaborate to ensure that the students are being accommodated in both campuses.

In Spring of 2004, DePaul University announced the closing of the Barat Campus at the end of the 2004-2005 academic year. A transition plan for the LOP students transferring to PLuS was developed and will be in place for Autumn 2004-2005 (see also [Barat Students](#)).

III. SERVICES & ACCOMODATIONS

All DePaul University students with a recent (within the last three for AD/HD and five for LD years) psychoeducational evaluation with a diagnosis of a Learning Disability and/or Attention Deficit Disorder are eligible for PLS services. The testing should include measures of intelligence (such as the WAIS-III), measures of academic performance (such as the WJ-III, WIAT-II, etc) and measures of information processing.

After the PLS director has reviewed the student's documentation, and after all PLS application materials have been received, the student will be admitted into PLS. If the testing is incomplete or outdated, the student will need to have his/her testing updated to be eligible for services. Students may choose to be tested through the PLS Program.

Failure to notify PLS about the need of accommodations because of the LD, and/or AD/HD will result in delays of the whole procedure. PLS strongly recommends making your initial contact upon being accepted at DePaul.

Initial recommendations for accommodations (extended time on tests, etc.) will be made by the PLS diagnostician (if the student was tested through PLS) or by the PLS director after reviewing the documentation provided by the student. Subsequent changes in services or accommodations can be recommended by the PLS clinician in consultation with the director. PLS follows the guidelines of [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and [The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504](#) to determine the most appropriate accommodations for the students.

Important Notice: Please be aware that for students to receive any accommodations at the post-secondary level, they need to disclose to the appropriate office in the university (Section 504, ADA Act, FERPA) and provide appropriate documentation. DePaul University has two centralized offices that could help students with disabilities:

- PLS Program: for students with LD and/or ADHD
- Office for Students with Disabilities: for students with disabilities other than the above

For more information please contact Stamatios Miras, Director of PLS, at 773-325-4239, or at smiras@depaul.edu, or visit <http://condor.depaul.edu/~plus>.

For more information regarding the laws governing the students' rights and responsibilities at the university level, please visit PLS website's '**Confidentiality**' page <http://condor.depaul.edu/~plus/confidentiality.htm>

The PLS Program provides the following accommodations: test proctoring, priority registration, advocacy, weekly sessions with a clinician (LD specialist) based upon availability, and diagnostic testing. There are three levels of participation in the PLS program: Full Time (two one-hour sessions per week with a clinician), Part Time (one one-hour session per week with a clinician), and Independent Status (no weekly meetings; the student receives all the accommodations required by the law, and meets with the PLS director on a need basis). A description of these services and accommodations follows:

- **Exam proctoring:** this service is provided to eligible students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorders in accordance with federal and state laws. Recommendations are made after reviewing each student's information on file, and after establishing eligibility of the accommodation. These accommodations are designed to assist students in demonstrating their skills or acquired knowledge to the best of their abilities, and to ensure that the students are being evaluated on the same basis as the rest of their classmates.

The following alternative test administration accommodations may be provided by PLuS:

- extended time on the exam
- separate room to eliminate distractions
- reader to read the exam's questions
- transcriber to type the student's responses
- computer for the student to type his/her responses

Students' responsibilities: at least a week before the date of the exam, the student should notify the professor and the PLuS Program that s/he will be taking an exam at the PLuS office. Failure to do so will result in not being able to provide test proctoring as PLuS has limited space and resources available. For a detailed description of the test proctoring procedures, please review the Exam Proctoring Procedures form located at the PLuS website (<http://condor.depaul.edu/~plus/forms.htm>).

- **Priority registration:** upon reviewing the student's documentation, PLuS may recommend for a student to receive priority registration. This accommodation is reserved for those students whose medication schedule may interfere with their class schedule, or those whose processing deficits require specific considerations.

Students' responsibilities: students should make an appointment to see their academic advisors, and then meet with their clinicians, or the PLuS director if they are on Independent Status, to design the most appropriate schedule for them. The PLuS clinicians are not advisors, but they can help the students make appropriate and manageable decisions when choosing a schedule, based on their strengths and weaknesses, the courses' demands, and the professors' teaching style if the information is available. If a PLuS student regularly ignores the recommendations of the PLuS clinician and/or the director, and becomes "at risk" or on probationary status, the PLuS director, the clinician and the student will meet to discuss the status of the student with DePaul University and the PLuS Program.

- **Advocacy:** PLuS provides advocacy for all registered students. In the event that a PLuS student feels that because of lack of communication, and/or other reasons s/he cannot handle by her/himself a situation with a DePaul University faculty or staff member, PLuS can provide advocacy to resolve the issue.

Students' responsibilities: In order for the director, or the PLuS clinician to be able to help the student to the best of their abilities, the student must contact the PLuS Program as early as possible to avoid situations reaching a point beyond repair.

- **Weekly sessions with a clinician:** PLuS students may choose to have weekly sessions with PLuS clinicians once or twice a week for the duration of the quarter. The sessions last for an hour during which the students work on developing skills and strategies that will help them complete the quarter successfully. These sessions are not for doing homework nor are the clinicians tutors for specific subjects. Examples of what these sessions may be used for are: time management, organization skills, writing skills, reading strategies, etc.

Please note that availability of clinicians is limited. In the event that a clinician is not available, the students may choose to be placed on a waiting list. There is a fee associated with this service:

Fees for sessions with a clinician: One hour per week (Part-time) \$350.00 per quarter
Two hours per week (Full-time) \$600.00 per quarter

Students' responsibilities: if a clinician is available, and the student has arranged to have weekly sessions, s/he must attend all of these meetings. If the student is unable to attend a regularly

scheduled session, s/he should notify the clinician at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting. Un-notified absences ("no shows") and excessive absences (more than 2 for part time students, and more than 4 for full time students per quarter) will be reviewed by the director and the PLuS clinician to determine if this service needs to be terminated, and placement of the student in Independent Status is necessary.

- **Diagnostic Testing:** Testing for learning disabilities can be arranged through the PLuS Program on a case-by-case basis. If a DePaul University student has not been tested before, or if her/his testing has not been updated within the last five years, the student may choose to be tested by the PLuS Program. The testing is done in two stages; the first one establishes the student's potential and provides information which is used as an indicator in the decision making process of proceeding with stage two. The second stage determines the existence of a LD comparing this information to the student's performance.

<u>Fees for diagnostic sessions:</u>	First stage	\$300.00
	Second stage	\$300.00

Please note that PLuS does not provide testing for AD/HD; if testing for AD/HD is deemed necessary for a student, then several referrals to educational institutions, hospitals, and private practitioners are available.

☐ **Services in collaboration with the Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD)**

Upon reviewing the student's documentation, PLuS may recommend for a student to receive some or all of the following services which are provided in collaboration with OSD: books on tape and activation of student's ID card to copy class notes. Additionally, OSD may be consulted as a resource regarding assistive technology computers and students' rights and responsibilities as students with disabilities at DePaul University. A description of these services and accommodations follows:

- **Books on tape:** PLuS students can have their course readings put on tape. The students should contact OSD and inform them that they are members of the PLuS Program. OSD will then fill a Needs Assessment Form, and make the necessary arrangements. Please ask the director of PLuS or a PLuS clinician for further details.

NOTE: this is a time consuming service that requires the effort and time of a lot of people; failure to follow PLuS' and OSD's procedures for this service will result in inability to provide books on tape.

- **Copy card:** PLuS students who need to copy notes for their DePaul University classes may contact OSD, and their DePaul University ID card will be activated and work as a copy card to selected copying machines throughout the University. Please note that neither PLuS nor OSD provide note-takers at this time.

For further details regarding these services, please ask your clinician or the PLuS director, and contact OSD.

IV. P LuS STUDENT POPULATION

The student population of P LuS is diverse. Students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD form a group which is one of the many unique groups of students served on DePaul University's campuses. This distinctive group is compiled from students who vary in race, age, and academic background, and who are enrolled in eight of the nine schools and colleges of DePaul (the exception being Barat College) pursuing bachelor and master degrees in 45 majors.

Although many P LuS students fall into the traditional age range of 18-22, approximately 24% of P LuS students are adults over the age of 24. Of these students that seek help from P LuS, many fall into the category of "undiagnosed learning disabled" before they come to P LuS. Once they are diagnosed and start receiving services, many who have had a history of failure find that they can successfully compete in the academic environment. This aspect of the diversity in P LuS' student body, along with DePaul's unique degree programs such as the School for New Learning, attract adult students to DePaul.

Students who have unsuccessfully attempted college in the past, and have been admitted at DePaul given another chance, are another portion of the P LuS group. Many of them have gone to several different schools before coming to DePaul and finally find success with the support of the P LuS Program, as well as, the other support services that DePaul offers.

Furthermore, students who have benefited from P LuS frequently are looking for opportunities to "pay back" DePaul for what they have received. Several current and former P LuS students are (or have been) working for the University, are (or have been) in student leadership positions, are (or have been) involved with the various extra-curricular activities DePaul offers, and have also been involved in tutoring other DePaul students.

There are three types of participants in the P LuS Program:

- Full time students who receive P LuS services and meet with a clinician for two hours per week
- Part time students who receive P LuS services and meet with a clinician once a week
- Independent students who receive P LuS services, but meet with the director on a need basis only.

P LuS 2003 – 2004 Participants

The total number of P LuS participants throughout the 2003-2004 academic year was 175, representing a 19.9% increase from last academic year's participants, and a 30.5% increase from the 2001-2002 academic year. This number includes all the students who received services for at least one full quarter during the academic year (new participants, transferred participants to DePaul, transferred to other colleges, participants who stopped receiving services, and graduates). Finally 28 participants graduated this year.

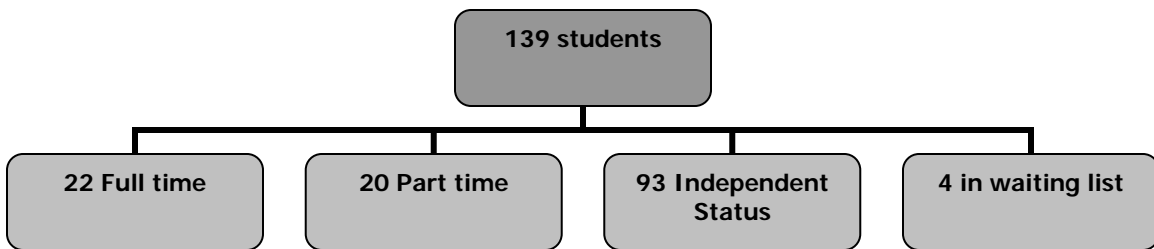
What follows is additional demographic information regarding the P LuS participants and their numbers by quarter, by DePaul University School or College, and by academic status.

V. PLuS 2003 – 2004 PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

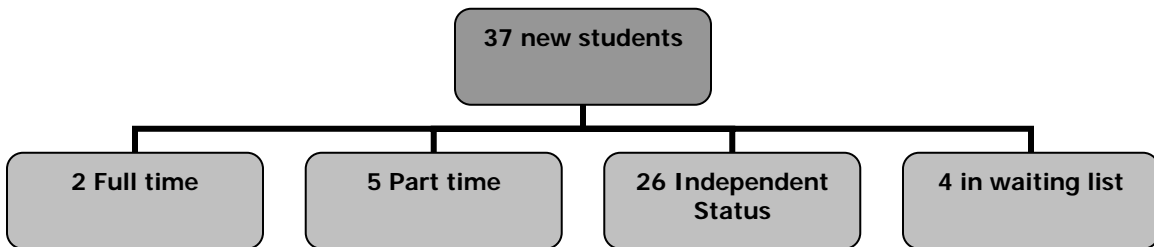
Number and Type of PLuS Participants by Quarter

AUTUMN 2003-2004

During the Autumn Quarter the PLuS Program reached, yet again, an all-time high number of participants. For the third year in a row, there was a waiting list of students who wished weekly sessions with a clinician. The following diagrams show the number of full time, part time, and independent status students who participated in PLuS, as well as those on a waiting list during the Autumn 2003-2004 Quarter.

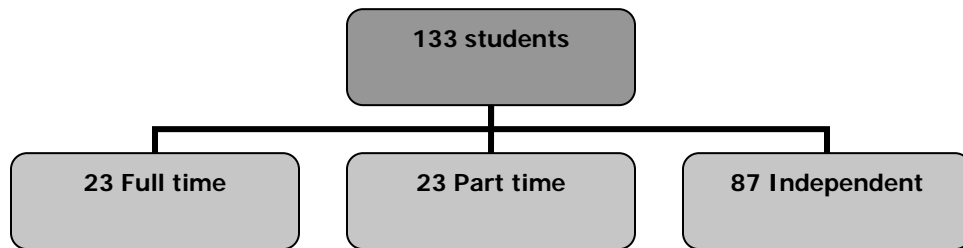


AUTUMN 2003-2004 NEW STUDENTS

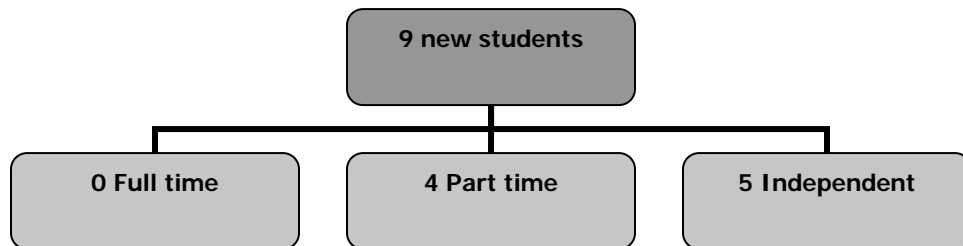


WINTER 2003-2004

All students who had requested weekly sessions with a clinician were serviced during the Winter Quarter, and the waiting list was eliminated. This was managed because of the addition of another part-time clinician. Finally, through referrals from faculty, nine new students had their needs evaluated and became participants.

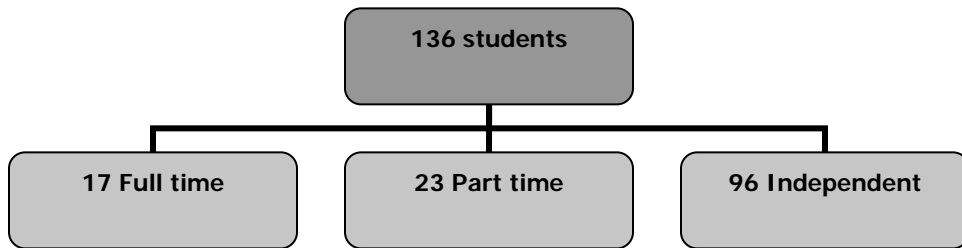


WINTER 2003-2004 NEW STUDENTS

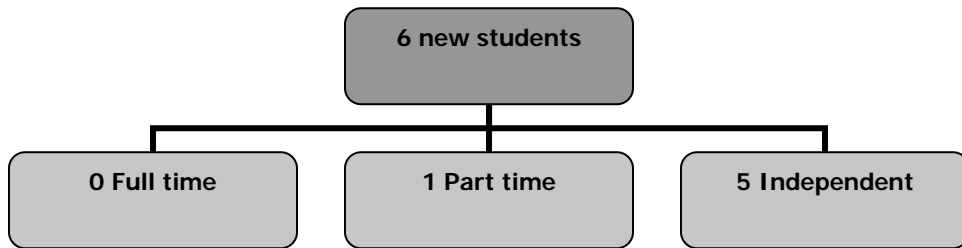


SPRING 2003-2004

During the Spring Quarter, there were six students who stopped receiving clinician services and changed their status to independent; five of these students were among the 2003 DePaul graduates. Additionally, there were six new students who enrolled in PLuS; three were through faculty referrals and three transferred from other colleges.



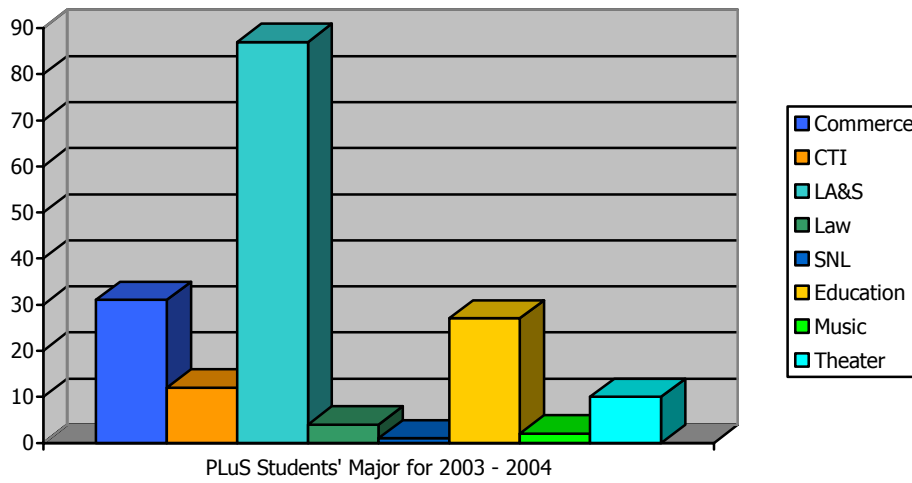
SPRING 2003-2004 NEW STUDENTS



Number of PLuS Participants by DePaul's Schools or Colleges, Majors and Campuses

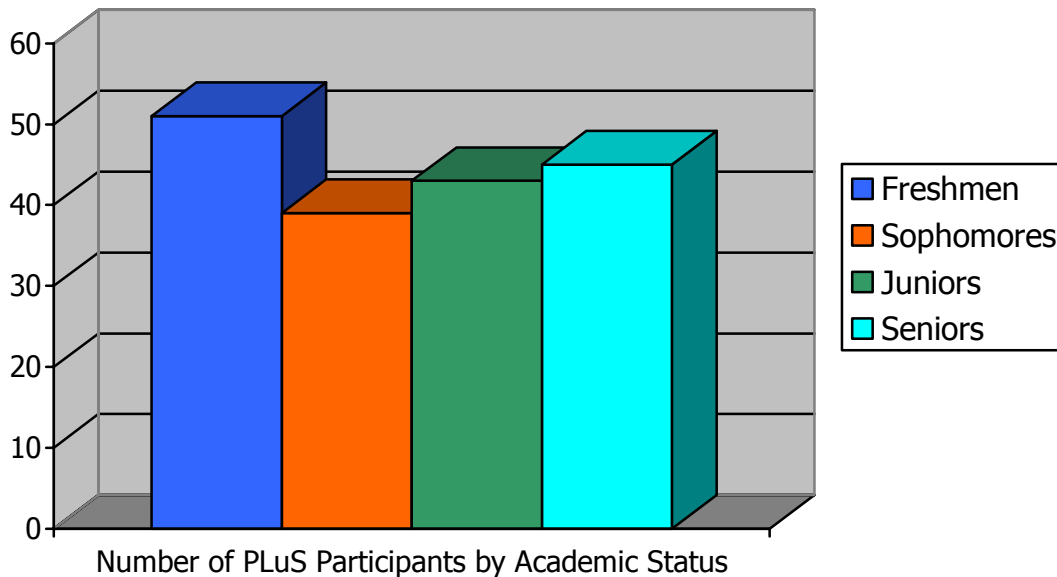
Barat College	(LOP provides services)	
College of Commerce and Charles H. Kellstadt Graduate School of Business	31 students	Accountancy 01 Commerce 02 Finance 03 Management 05 Marketing 02 Undecided 15 Grad./Entrepreneurship 02 Grad./Bus. Admin. 01
School of Computer Science, Telecommunications and Information Systems	13 students	Graphics & Animation 03 Computer Science 06 Information Systems 02 Network Technologies 01 Grad./E-Commerce 01
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	87 students	American Studies 01 Anthropology 04 Art & Art History 05 Biological Sciences 01 Communication 20 History 03 International Studies 01 Mathematical Sciences 02 Philosophy 01 Political Science 06 Psychology 05 Sociology 04 Student-at-large 01 Undecided 32 Grad./Sociology 01
College of Law	4 students	Jur. Doctor Day 03
School for New Learning	1 student	
School of Education	27 students	Early Childhood 08 Elementary Education 07 Physical Education 03 Secondary Education 03 Undecided 04 Grad./T&L 01 Grad./Serv. & Coun. 01
School of Music	2 students	Music Business 01 Grad./Music Performance 01
The Theater School	10 Students	Acting 03 Lighting Design 01 Playwriting 01 Stage Management 01 Theater Studies 03 Theater Technology 01

Academic Year	Lincoln Park Students	Loop Students	Total
2003 - 2004	126	49	175



Number of PLuS Participants by Academic Status

Freshmen	53		
Sophomores	48		
Juniors	33		
Seniors	41	4 th year seniors	27
		5 th year seniors	10
		6 th and more	04



VI. Activities of the PLuS Program

During the academic year 2003-2004, the PLuS director and clinicians:

- provided services and accommodations to past, current, and prospective PLuS students
- provided services and presented information to faculty and staff of the DePaul community
- provided services and collaborated with:
 - the Academic Resource Center (ARC)
 - the Office of Admissions
 - the Office of Athletic Academic Advising
 - the Bridge Program
 - the Dean of Students' Office
 - the Distance Learning Office
 - the Office for Students with Disabilities
 - the Trio Program
 - the College Office of LA&S
 - and the School of Education
- provided community outreach services by participating in conferences, and post-secondary opportunities for High School students
- created opportunities for integration of technology and streamlining of services

What follows is a detailed description of these activities.

PLuS Director's Activities

- Program-wide Actions
 - Maintained PLuS website (see [Technology](#) Section for details)
 - Leased new computers for PLuS clinicians and students (see [Technology](#) Section for details)
 - Updated PLuS forms, and the PLuS Application Process
 - Revised diagnostic report for students tested by PLuS
- Services to past, current, and prospective students
 - Met with prospective students and their parents
 - Reviewed documentation requirements to determine eligibility for services
 - Provided advocacy to current students
 - Coordinated exam proctoring for prospective DePaul students with ARC
 - Coordinated and provided exam proctoring for current PLuS students; this service requires DePaul faculty, PLuS staff and students to manage the logistics of test proctoring and guarantee that the highest exam proctoring standards are followed while providing the most reasonable accommodations to the students and addressing faculty concerns. PLuS proctored:

Quarter	Midterms	Finals	Total
Autumn 03-04	139	136	275
Winter 03-04	143	118	261
Spring 03-04	98	71	169
2003 – 2004 totals	380	325	705

- Presentations and Workshops to DePaul Faculty, Staff and Students
 - Presented information regarding the characteristics of students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders to graduate students in the *LSI 446: Psychology & Education of the Exceptional Child* course
 - Presented information regarding legal and moral obligations of faculty and staff towards students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders to students in the *LSE 258: Education & Social Justice* course
 - Presented information regarding the characteristics of college students with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders during the SSS and TRIO programs' staff orientation
 - Participated in S.T.O.P Workshops, organized by the College Office of LA&S for students who are placed on probation
 - Participated and Co-hosted with the Coordinator of the Office for Students with Disabilities the First Service Improvement Forum

- Collaborative Efforts
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with numerous faculty members throughout the university to address concerns, establish referral processes, and communicate recommendations for accommodations
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with the Coordinator of the Office for Students with Disabilities to coordinate services and accommodations for students
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with the Office of Admissions to ensure communication of accurate information to incoming and prospective students
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with Athletic Department's academic advisors to address the needs of student-athletes participating in PLuS
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with Bridge Program's academic advisors to address the needs of Bridge students participating in PLuS
 - Regular communication and informal/formal meetings with ARC staff to ensure accommodations for incoming students (placement testing)

- Service to the School of Education
 - Served on the *Reading Specialist Committee* fine-tuning the implementation of the 'Reading Specialist' graduate program, and developing performance indicators and matrices for each program's standards
 - Taught course *432: Developing Literacy: Assessment and Instruction II* for above mentioned program
 - Taught course *T&L 413: Language Arts in the Middle School*
 - Facilitated and supervised School of Education student teachers who were also PLuS Program participants

- Meetings and Interviews
 - Conducted intake interviews from referrals to the PLuS Program by DePaul University faculty
 - Conducted Graduate Assistant interviews and meetings with the Director of the Reading and Learning Lab
 - Conducted weekly PLuS staff meetings with PLuS Clinicians
 - Attended School of Education quarterly faculty and staff meetings

- Community Outreach
 - Participated in CHOICES, the annual Post-Secondary Education Options Night organized by seven school districts in the greater Chicagoland area (November 2003). During this event, the PLuS director shared information regarding DePaul University, the PLuS Program and support for LD college students.

- Presented information on organization, function, services offered, and overall design of PLuS to visitors from Harper College who were researching LD support programs at the post-secondary education level (March, 2004).
- Participated in the Annual Business Breakfast organized by the Niles Township High Schools for their junior and senior students interested in learning more about employment, the working force, and business opportunities as they relate to their education (may 2004).

- Technology

- Maintained the PLuS website (<http://condor.depaul.edu/~plus>).

The website was designed and launched last academic year, in August of 2002; it was redesigned, introducing a more user-friendly format, and it was re-launched in March of 2003 based on comments and feedback by students, faculty and staff. The website's success became evident a few months after the initial launch, and it still receives positive comments about the richness of its content and its usefulness.

Overall, the PLuS website is designed in such a way that it provides information about PLuS, Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorders in a comprehensive way; allows students to communicate with PLuS and vice versa; provides access to application materials and forms used by clinicians, students and faculty on a quarterly basis; and serves as a resource by providing links to LD and AD/HD information.

- Used an E-Newsletter to remind PLuS participants, and the DePaul community in general, of important dates and deadlines, and actions they needed to take during each quarter.
- Leased an additional computer providing, for the second year access to up-to-date technology for all PLuS clinicians and students.
- Completed updating the PLuS Database adding information for the 2000-2001 academic year thus allowing access to demographic and academic information of the PLuS students and clinicians for three consecutive academic years. The PLuS Database is designed and developed in Microsoft Access and it allows to sort PLuS participants' information in a variety of predetermined ways while being flexible enough to allow for future changes and/or growth.

- Professional Development

- Attended the CHADD International Conference (October 2003); the sessions attended focused on AD/HD students (high school to adult) and diagnostic practices, AD/HD adolescents/adults and Coaching, AD/HD adults and comorbidity, and a forum of AD/HD students and adults (4th grade to graduate school) describing how AD/HD impacted their learning.
- Attended the 'Financial Stewardship & Legal Compliance' workshop, developed by DePaul University (December 2003)

PLuS Clinicians' Activities

In addition to their direct work with students the PLuS clinicians:

- Provided advocacy to current students
- Participated in weekly PLuS staff meetings
- Taught graduate courses as part-time faculty in the School of Education

VII. The PLS Program: Present and Future

During the Academic year 2003-2004, PLS continued its role as one of the support programs of DePaul University by further developing its services to students and faculty as well as acting as a resource to others seeking to provide services to college students with learning disabilities. Based on feedback from high-school transition counselors, DePaul faculty and staff, parents of prospective and current students and PLS participants, the program is considered one of the 'premiere' support programs in the state and is developing a similar status at a national level.

In order to "make better sense" of the program's current and future dynamics, background information and students' demographics taken from the PLS Database, DePaul University's Vision 2006 plan, DePaul's Strategic Planning current state, Enrollment Management statistics, and national LD and AD/HD organizations findings were incorporated to the above mentioned information. According to the picture created by combining all this information, if PLS is to maintain and function under the same standards that it does today, certain changes must occur. PLS was designed for one third of the amount of students that it is serving today, and even though that design proved to be a very successful one, it is no longer able to sustain the program.

PLS Program: The Present

In order to better understand PLS in the present, three key concepts need to be addressed; the role of the PLS clinicians and the importance of teaching skills and strategies, the growth of PLS, and the quality of services offered.

1. PLS Clinicians & the Importance of Teaching

As noted earlier ([PLS' Philosophy & Mission](#)) the cornerstone of the program is the one-on-one Clinician/Student weekly meetings. These meetings are not "tutoring sessions" in the sense that the students will bring their homework to the clinicians for help; the sessions focus on remediation of basic skills, instruction in compensatory strategies and instruction in study/learning strategies that maximize the use of each student's strengths. The goal is for each student to understand his/her learning strengths and weaknesses and choose the most appropriate strategies that will help the student achieve his/her academic and career goals.

PLS' philosophy is that ultimately the students will become independent learners who understand their strengths and weaknesses and are able to choose among a varied repertoire of strategies, the most appropriate depending on what is being asked of them. Consequently, knowing themselves will help them in succeeding in the work place, and ease their transition from college to employment. Therefore, PLS believes that teaching students all of the above is of the utmost importance.

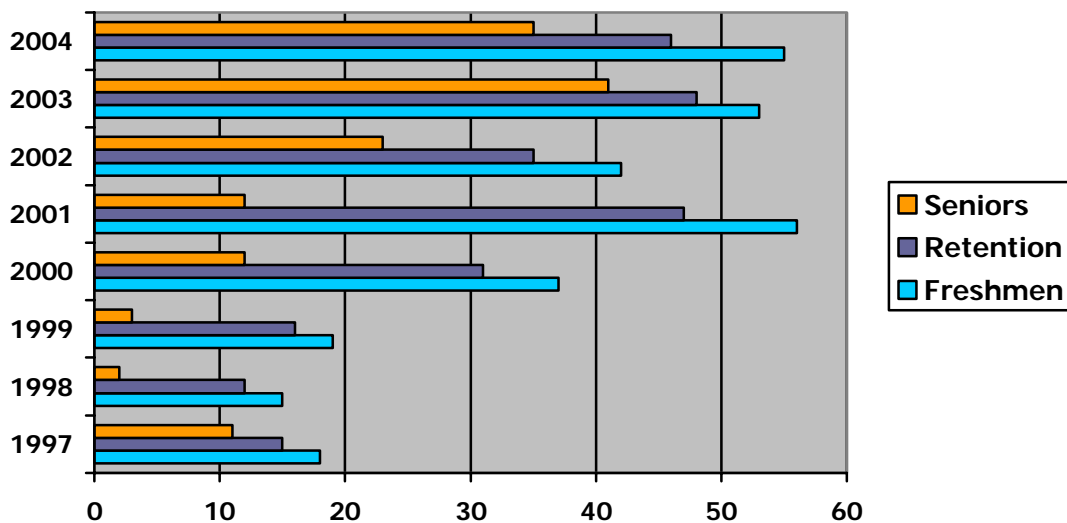
Current research constantly reinforces the importance of teaching compensatory skills and strategies to learning disabled students, and organization and time management skills to students with attention deficit disorders while providing accommodations. As noted in the article *College Opportunities for Students With Learning Disabilities* prepared by the Council for Learning Disabilities (2002) "Of particular importance to students with LD are standards related to fostering self-advocacy, providing instruction in learning strategies, specifying policies and procedures for students with disabilities, and doing program evaluation." Also, in *Selecting A College for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)* published by The Council for Exceptional Children (2001), students are advised to compare college support services on the basis of being able "to improve social skills, study skills, learning strategies, communications skills, or assertiveness." (See [Appendix A](#) for references).

Putting theory to practice, the numbers of freshmen vs. seniors requesting services and accommodations from PLS, prove that teaching skills and strategies while developing metacognitive functions, leads to

students' independence. What follows is a look at how many freshmen and seniors have been requesting services since 1997; the DePaul University retention rate of 84.2% (2000) was also calculated to project how many students would have requested services. The most evident conclusion after looking at these numbers is that there are constantly fewer seniors using PLS services than freshmen, reinforcing the idea that with the appropriate inventory of skills and strategies, LD and/or AD/HD students can be independent learners.

Academic Year	Freshmen in PLS	Seniors in PLS	Seniors expected by Retention Rate of DePaul
1997 – 1998	18	11	15
1998 - 1999	15	2	13
1999 - 2000	19	3	16
2000 - 2001	37	12	31
2001 - 2002	56	12	47
2002 - 2003	42	23	35
2003 – 2004	53	41	48
2004 – 2005 (projected)	55	35	46

PLuS Freshmen & Seniors Participants



Based on above mentioned facts and data, it is apparent that the role of the Clinicians to the PLS program is of paramount importance. Without the Clinicians, PLS would not be able to offer what most incoming freshmen are asking for, and would not be able to distinguish itself among the other programs offered in the state of Illinois and the nation.

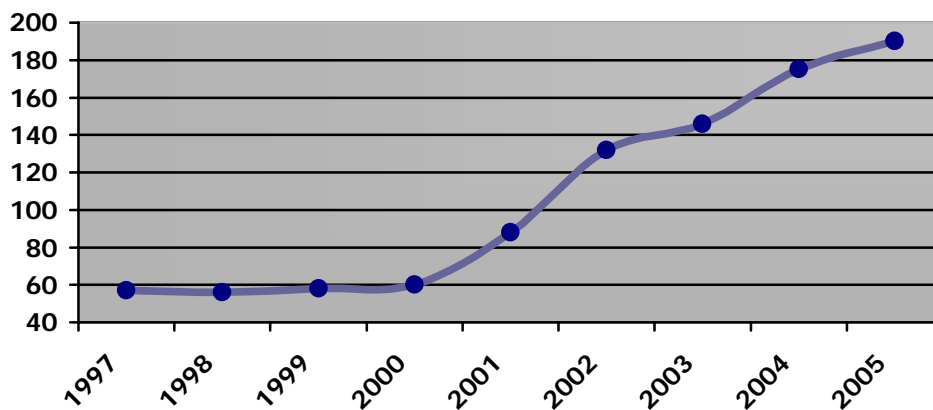
PLuS currently has six Clinicians and who are part-time and have a Masters degree in Learning Disabilities and/or Special Education. These professionals are being paid an hourly salary, which even though was increased last academic year (the first increase in six years), it still does not adequately compensate the clinicians for the amount and quality of work they provide.

2. Growth of PLuS

According to the Annual Reports found on file from the previous director, the data collected during the last two academic years, and current PLuS participants who requested services for the next academic year including PLuS applications received, PLuS served:

Academic Year	Students
1996 - 1997	61
1997 - 1998	57
1998 - 1999	56
1999 - 2000	60
2000 - 2001	88
2001 - 2002	132
2002 - 2003	146
2003 - 2004	175
2004 - 2005 (projected)	190

PLuS Participants 1997 - 2004



Based on these numbers, PLuS experienced a 46.6% increase of participants between the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 academic years, a 60.9% increase the following year, a 10.6% the next one, and a 19.8% this year. Next year’s increase, based on the projected number of participants, will be between 9.5 and 12.5%.

Furthermore, based on information shared during the CHOICES College Night and the LDA Post-Secondary Education Options Fair it is evident that incoming students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder choose the University they will attend based on academic majors and LD support services offered.

Additionally, knowing that:

- according to the paper [2001 College Freshmen with Disabilities: A Biennial Statistical Profile](#) published by the [National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities](#) students with learning disabilities are the fastest growing group entering as freshmen since 1988 totaling 39.6% of disabled students; in 1988 LD students composed 15% of the total number of disabled students entering college.
- in the paper [Getting Ready for College: Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities](#) published by the [National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities](#) in 1995, and [Students with Learning Disabilities in Postsecondary Education](#) (in press) students with Learning Disabilities were the ones valuing the most the support and remedial services offered in Universities, and the most likely to use them.
- there are 1.5 million children between the ages of 5-18 currently being treated for AD/HD [Harman, Patty. *Annual Conference Highlights*. Attention! February 2002 Issue; Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder].
- increasingly, the nation's higher educational system is awakening to the needs of its special students. Today, students with AD/HD can choose among colleges that offer a wide array of services and programs designed to meet their unique learning needs [Rosenberg, Nancy and Stephen Spector. *Applying to College*. Attention! October 2001 Issue; Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder].
- and DePaul University's enrollment grew 5% from 2000 to 2001, 10% from 2001 to 2003 and has a projected 11% total increase until 2006,

it is apparent that PLuS' growth the last four years is a reflection of a wider phenomenon in post-secondary institutions and one which will persistently have an effect on the number of participants in PLuS the following years.

Finally, PLuS has already had five inquiries for the 2005-2006 academic year, and three of those students have already met with the director. This has been the earliest inquiry thus far from perspective students.

3. Quality of Services

The PLuS director and staff are dedicated to provide services of the highest standards to DePaul University students with LD and/or AD/HD. Adhering to this quality of services has resulted in PLuS being recognized locally and nationally as one of the best LD support services program in the post-secondary education level (for details see previous sections: [introduction](#) and [presentations and workshops](#)).

Having developed this status, PLuS attracts students to DePaul University who would otherwise choose a university with a better LD support program. One of the questions asked when students apply to PLuS is if they were considering a college with an LD support program, and if yes, how they became aware of PLuS and the services it offers. From the 175 participants of this academic year, 114 answered that question and cited the following:

- 20.2% of the students were advised by their high school counselors and/or psychologists to consider DePaul because of its LD support program
- 36% of the students researched universities with LD support programs (Princeton Review, Peterson Guide of Colleges, internet) by themselves or with their parents
- 6.1% asked or were informed during their initial visit at DePaul while considering colleges
- 23.7% were referred by DePaul University faculty and staff
- and 14% cited a variety of other reasons (family member, friend, DePaul alumni, etc).

	High School	Research	DePaul visit	DePaul referral	Other
Number of students	23	41	7	27	16
Percentage of students	20.2%	36%	6.1%	23.7%	14%

From the above mentioned reasons, the first three clearly influenced the students' decision making process of choosing DePaul University, while the role of the last two into the initial decision process is not clear. In other words, 71 students (or 62.3% of PLuS participants who provided information) this academic year, took into consideration the LD support program offered when choosing a college.

PLuS Program: The Future

Considering that teaching skills and strategies is an integral part of PLuS, that the number of students enrolled in the program will keep increasing and that what has made PLuS successful thus far is the quality of the services it offers, when contemplating the future of PLuS, one should take into consideration the following:

1. Transition to Student Affairs

Starting in the academic year 2004-2005, PLuS will be part of the Student Affairs Division. This administrative change is a reflection of the fact that PLuS serves a University-wide student population and logically should be part of a unit with similar programs. How this change would affect PLuS, is early to say; however, the initial contacts with the Student Affairs have been very positive and it seems that PLuS will be among other programs and people with similar goals and viewpoints.

Another aspect of this transition, is that even though PLuS will still be sharing space with the Reading & Learning Lab, resources will no longer be shared. Starting in the 2004-2005 academic year the three graduate assistants that helped with PLuS' daily operation will not be available.

2. Loop Campus Presence

Over the last three academic years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of students whose base is the Loop Campus. Through ingenuity and goodwill, PLuS has managed to provide services to those students; however, a more solid presence at the Loop Campus is necessary. One of the major functions of the program is to interact with faculty and staff and to inform them of the impact of LD and/or AD/HD on the academic performance of students; this is not currently possible because the director is at the Lincoln Park Campus and there is not another full-time PLuS member.

Academic Year	Lincoln Park Students	Loop Students	Total
2000 - 2001	69	19	88
2001 - 2002	98	38	136
2002 - 2003	109	39	148
2003 - 2004	126	49	175

3. Barat Students

After the announcement of the Barat Campus, several [Learning Opportunities \(LOP\) Program](#) students expressed an interest in transferring to the LPC. A concern of the directors of both programs was the seamless transition of the students from Barat to LPC. To help these students, PLS developed a transition plan that would support these students during their first academic year at LPC and gradually introduce them to the services offered by PLS.

For 2004-2005, five students have transferred and three who had originally applied at LOP are now freshmen participating in PLS.

For the 2005-2006 academic year, 15-20 students are believed to transfer to PLS. If these numbers are true, then PLS will not be able to guarantee that all of those students will have a LD specialist to help them in their transition to LPC.

PLS Program: Redefined

PLS has proposed for two consecutive academic years the creation of another full-time position, to address the issues mentioned above; no major changes have taken place in PLS' design for the last ten years, and today, PLS still operates with the same staff as in 1994 while providing services to triple the amount of students. Regrettably, the staff needs of the program were not addressed by the administration neither for this, nor for the next academic year.

As described above, PLS is still functioning the way it was created when it was serving 50 – 60 students. Based on the growth of the program, the current design, though successful in the past, is no longer able to guarantee to incoming students the quality of services that are at the core of PLS' philosophy. A comparison of the Director's job description ([Appendix B](#)) and the Director's activities as described in [Section VI](#) of this report can illustrate that the amount and diversity of the activities performed by the PLS director are well beyond the ones stated in the job description. The current director has to maintain contact and provide services and accommodations to a far greater number of students, staff and faculty than when the job description was conceived.

Additionally, hiring clinicians as part-time staff has become increasingly more difficult. Most applicants are looking for full-time employment and from the ones interested in a part-time position most are discouraged when they find out the hourly rate PLS currently offers. As a result, for the last two academic years, there was a waiting list of students who wanted to receive clinician services.

If PLS is to maintain the quality of services it promises, accommodate the LD and AD/HD population of students according to the law, and ensure that the students receive the support they need, it will either need additional resources, or to redefine itself.

Additional Resources

For all of the above to continue happening, additional staff and resources are needed for PLS. This would include an assistant director or a full-time clinician who could eliminate the waiting list of students who request clinician services, and oversee some of the areas currently covered by the director which are not part of the director's job description. More specifically, that person would:

- meet with students who request clinician services
- be responsible for exam proctoring; ,coordinating between students, faculty, and the Reading and Learning Lab for over 200 exams taken at PLS every quarter
- coordinate with ARC for the incoming students' placement tests
- maintain daily operations when the director is visiting the Loop Campus

Furthermore, graduate assistants will be needed to facilitate the daily operations of PLuS and test proctoring.

Redefining PLuS

Combining all of the above parameters to create a picture of the PLuS program, inevitably suggests that the PLuS program would need to redefine itself to maintain its mission and quality of services. During the last two academic years, PLuS struggled to provide high quality services with limited resources, and especially to maintain the services for which it is known and for which it attracts the majority of students.

The program's philosophy, mission and integrity dictate that certain changes are necessary; it is also imperative to do so, if PLuS wants to continue being one of the deciding factors for students to come to DePaul University.

Looking into the program's activities, the most time and energy consuming one is exam proctoring which is required according to [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) and [The Rehabilitation Act, Section 504](#). Therefore, this is logically the one activity, that if removed, would allow PLuS to maintain its high standards for the students. Based on the information described within this report, PLuS would not be able to provide this service in the future if it maintains its current administrative design. At the time this report was written, the administration had not responded to that.

VII. Long Term Plans

For the next academic year PLS is planning to do the following:

1. PLS Students' Database

Prior to the 2001-2002 academic year, data regarding PLS students is not easily accessible as it is located in:

- PLS students' files
- Old PLS annual reports
- Old PLS computer documents

There is a need for organizing this information in a manageable and meaningful way, in order to create a picture of the PLS program during previous academic years.

Goal: Input information for academic years prior to 2000-2001 based on information gathered from the above mentioned sources

Target Dates:	2000 – 2001 Academic Year	End of Autumn 2004-2005 Quarter
	1999 – 2000 Academic Year	End of Winter 2004-2005 Quarter
	1998 – 1999 Academic Year	End of Spring 2004-2005 Quarter

2. PLS Workshops

A need for quarterly workshops on current research in diagnosis and remediation of reading and learning disabilities, written language disorders, study skills and organization skills was identified in the Clinicians' Annual Performance Appraisals two years ago. Last year's workshops covered reading comprehension, written language and study skills.

Goal: Workshops which will focus on educational practices proven by research to be beneficial to college students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

Target Dates:	ADHD and comorbidity	Autumn 2004-2005 Quarter
	LD and neuropsychological research	Winter 2004-2005 Quarter
	(To be determined)	Spring 2004-2005 Quarter

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

PLuS DIRECTOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB SUMMARY

Coordinate, monitor and establish services for DePaul University Students who have learning disabilities.
Teach a graduate level practicum course in Reading and Learning Disabilities

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Advocate for PLuS student within and outside of the DePaul Community, which includes oral and/or written communication on a daily basis
- Prepare for and teach graduate level practicum course in LLSI program (currently one quarter a year)
- Monitor progress of current PLuS students, evaluate eligibility of prospective PLuS students; advise and provide support for PLuS alumni
- Supervise and support PLuS staff (part time)
- Educate DPU community, parents and outside professionals regarding learning disabilities via individual consultation and workshops
- Plan and monitor PLuS budget, approve salary timesheets bi weekly for staff
- Assign students to appropriate staff members, hire additional clinicians as needed
- Establish and revise PLuS policies
- Prepare for and lead PLuS staff meetings and other meetings
- Keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the field of LD via professional journals and conferences
- Develop PLuS Annual Report
- Plan for fundraising for scholarships

CHARACTERISTICS

EDUCATION AND REQUIREMENTS

- Master's Degree in LD
- Experience with adults with learning disabilities, especially college students
- Knowledge of assessment instruments for adult LD population
- Ability to supervise staff from a variety of backgrounds
- Ability to communicate on behalf of students with a wide variety of people
- Knowledge of successful teaching strategies and appropriate accommodations for LD college students
- Knowledge of relevant laws (sections 503 and 504, ADA)